

# THE HEADSHOT!

THE WORKING PERFORMER OR MODELS ULTIMATE MARKETING TOOL



Get more work by getting  
noticed by those that can  
get you more work!

*A short mini e-class compiled by*

**Gold Talent**  
GLOBAL NETWORK  
INTERNATIONAL



Hello Model and/or Performer!

### **Professional Headshots/Photos**

If YOU are truly interested in Being Discovered and Creating a Career in the world of Arts & Entertainment, then the first order of business for anyone wishing to enter the industry would be to obtain a professional headshot.

A headshot is pretty much what it sounds like; it's a professional portrait of you, so a casting professional will know what you look like. It's the first place to start when entering the industry.

However, there are a great number of different opinions when it comes to what an appropriate headshot is.



Let's focus on what a commercial headshot should be to start off with. First of all, it's important to note that if you don't have a good headshot to submit to casting opportunities, you have little chance in getting any auditions. The better the picture is, the more likely that you'll be viewed as a professional worthy of any casting agent or directors time of offering you an audition.

Many Performers are using color shots as opposed to the traditional black and white shot. With technology becoming more affordable and usable, digital color shots are becoming the norm in today's industry. There are a couple of suggestions that will help you find the best shot to use.

First, commercial headshots would generally be of you, the model or performer smiling, or carrying a more solemn look/image. That being said, how many times have you had pictures taken and found that your smile seems fake? This is a problem many people have, so when having your headshot taken by a photographer it's a good idea to bring music that helps to put a genuine smile on your face when you have your pictures taken. Happiness shows.

A strong commercial headshot is generally framed to capture the performers head and shoulders, but in some cases could include up to half the actor's body in the shot.



It's *more important to capture the best representation* of you rather than how much of your body is in the photo. It's also of great importance to understand that when you walk into an audition that you **look like the headshot** that you've submitted.



You were called in because your headshot matches the physical needs of the character so if you walk in looking completely different then you'll have little chance of booking the job. And - you will have annoyed the people in the room.

The audition team or casting director have offered you the audition based on the look you presented them in your headshot, and they expect to meet the same person. If you can't be bothered, then you will be met with exactly that same response and will never get anywhere. It's Bye-Bye, Game over.

Also, make sure that you don't overly edit (touch up) your photo. Remember, the headshot is supposed to look like you.

Second, realize the **importance of this marketing tool**. While you might have a friend or relative that is handy with a camera, a professional headshot is one of the most important marketing tools you have.



Always use a **professional photographer** that has a great deal of experience shooting headshots for actors. Trust their judgement - *you should of course* have



researched some of the headshots they have previously produced.

You can talk with the photographer before-hand too, so he/she gets an idea of what it is that you are wanting to achieve so they can include aspects of your personality on the photo-shoot!

Too many people have had to shoot and re-shoot their headshots because they didn't use a

photographer that could meet their needs. Once you have found that perfect picture to represent you on a commercial level then it's time to get them duplicated.

While proper headshots are expected to be on actual photo paper, you can get away with digitally printed copies (in high quality) for the commercial shots because of the number of performers submitting headshots to a large number of commercial casting calls. We suggest that you always print around 50 copies per batch to start off with, and re-print as you go along.

**Always take your PRINTED headshot with you to any casting or audition.**

Depending on where you live in the world, the finished, duplicated printed headshot will be around 8" by 10" in size, normally with a small border and your name printed generally on the bottom margin of the shot.





There are some exceptions of course, but the total size is expected to be the average 8x10 whether you are using a shot that's portrait or landscape formatted.

These shots will be what you or your agent submits to casting calls, so make sure the finished product is both professional and of the highest quality.

If you are signed (or when you sign up) with an agency, the company will often add their logo and contact details to the photo too.

You as a performer and/or model will be responsible for the cost of shooting and duplicating headshots, but you will find it to be an excellent investment once you've booked even one job! It's like having a large calling card

to use at all times! ***So, what makes a good headshot?***

Always pay attention to framing, lighting, and background.

In general, a **good headshot** is chest-up with **good** lighting on your face, and no strong dramatic shadows, unless you are going in for "The Phantom of the Opera." Three-quarter shots are **good** for print, and extreme close-ups are **good** for, well, nothing.

If **you** would wear a polo or tee-shirt to the office, a **smiling** shot will likely work best. If **you** feel a suit and dark background is most appropriate, a more serious **headshot** may be the way to go. Remember, confidence and approachability are key, regardless of whether **you smile** big or not.

### 7 Suggested Tips for Better Headshots

1. Go pro. Spend money—it's worth it. ...
2. Opt for personality over glamour. Make sure it looks like you. ...
3. Remember: It's all about the eyes. ...
4. Pay attention to framing, lighting, and background. ...
5. Consider natural light vs. studio lighting.
6. Don't go crazy with clothing and props. ...
7. Go easy with the makeup....



Always remember and as we have previously stated, your headshots, (*combined with your showreel of course!*), are the very **foundations** of your performing arts or model profile. They are without a doubt a **key marketing tool** for your art related career.

It's of paramount importance to prepare yourself in order to get the most out of your session. Here we will work to answer most of the common questions that we usually receive on how to prepare for your headshot photo session.

**Clothing:** The clothes you wear in your headshot are crucial; the type, color, and style can make the difference between having an effective headshot that gets you noticed and one that's ignored. But figuring out what to wear is actually the third step in prepping for a headshot session.

The first thing you need to do is figure out your "type." How are you realistically going to be cast if you are an actor? Are you going to get work as the doctor or lawyer are you a Russian spy or a private detective? As a model, what is your forte? What are you wishing to show: Your Fashion, Runway, commercial look?

Once you determine these aspects then you'll realistically be submitted for, practice creating the right emotions and expressions so you come across as that type in your photos. Only after you are clear about your "type" you can think about **wardrobe**.



## What to Bring?

For your headshot photo-session please bear in mind that you are *selecting your outfits to create the image of the characters you could play or are working towards building* - (the more different looks, the wider range for castings. Don't select your clothes solely just because you look good in them, rather think about which outfits will help you portraying those characters the best.

Remember to bring a **range of different outfits** – but how many would that be?

Unless you are coming for a refresher shoot which only really requires two outfits, we would recommend around 7-8 different outfits and garments across a range of fabrics and styles - the more options the better! The photographer will see things in you that you may not yet be aware of, so bring a lot of different looks and style options to your shoot.

A top with a vivid color also helps to make the headshot stand out from the rest and “pop”. It is also a good idea to make this color match your eyes. Make sure everything is ironed and looks neat. Unless you intend going to a casting as the “wrinkled shirt guy,” it’s not a good look.



**Black and White Tops:** A white or black t-shirt is always a safe bet and I always recommend having at least one headshot in this simple outfit. It works... is it the most exciting? Nope – but it works!.

Will it make you look like a college graduate? Sure it may but then you should be bringing interesting black tops, vests for people who are happy with the definition of their arms can work great, a nice shirt can look great, white or black blouses.... Also, make sure you bring at least one black and one white t-shirt when you prepare your bag for your headshot session/photoshoot.

**Dark and Jewel Colors:** We personally prefer darker colors on most people unless you have a really rich skin tone or loads of dark hair.

Other colors that look great on camera are mustard, dark greens, blues, maroon, burgundy. Be bold and surprise yourself – and your photographer! Your shots need to look good in color. The way the colors work together with your look and image and your hair is very important.

**Dresses:** Girls don’t forget you may have some nice dresses in your wardrobe where the top half and neckline are great. You could even wear them over your jeans if you wish, mix and match works well, depending on your personality.

**Vests and Off-The-Shoulder:** Yes, can look lovely, skin is a great way to bring color and a natural tone to the image, and necks and shoulders are a lovely feminine feature to show off.



**Layer up with Jackets, Blazers and Coats:** It's also great to layer up clothes: Denim with a t-shirt is a solid casual young look. Leather jacket and t-shirt is "instant rock & roll".

**Blazers are fantastic if you're a little older** and can play corporate or cop/business type roles, or smart mums. Coats are really good but *avoid big furry collars* or oversized collars. **Smart and simple is best...** duffle coats and bombers look too casual.

We do recommend wearing a turtle neck garment for your headshot. It can make your neck look shorter and sometimes we end up having "floating head effect" in which your top blends too much with background making your head appear like its floating in the middle of the frame. Not so cool!

**Patterns and Logos:** Avoid crazy patterns. Some light patterns are fine and can be great for character shots, but mad neon tie-dye is out I'm afraid! Try and avoid heavy logos as well, as they are distracting sometimes.



**Hair:** Let's talk about hair, and this is really important: *Do not get your hair cut or colored the day before or, worse, the morning of the shoot.*

Why risk it? It could go horribly wrong. Give it some breathing time so you know you're really happy with it and you can control it.

Also, don't book your headshot photo-session if you're planning on cutting a fringe a week later... pointless!

Everyone's hair is obviously so different, but 9 times out of 10, girls if you have a long hairstyle, then flaunt it!

Also, here are our thoughts about "partings":

Loads of girls come with neat center partings, but by the end of the shoot we've experimented and **they prefer an off-center** as it creates a bit more interest with the asymmetrical shape.



**Layers:** Layers can be tricky, if you stand in the mirror, tilt your chin down 10 degrees, and your hair falls in your face, it will probably do that for the whole shoot. So, do you need to use some hairspray to keep it back open up the face a bit? Does it look good with sections gripped back?

**Hair up:** Also have a think beforehand about what 'hair up' works best, if any? Very high ponytails and high buns often get lost off the top of the photo as we crop the top off a little bit. Does it look nice a bit lower? or even anything to the side or platted? Think out LOUD when you plan these things, talk to yourself about it! - and enjoy making it all look different for yourself.

**When to Wash:** This sometimes takes military precision! Wash it first thing that morning and it can be too soft and not hold any shape or style, leave it too long and we don't want greasy dirty hair either. Only you know your hair - but know that 'too clean hair' can be a problem.

**Shaving:** You can shave during a session, but wet shaving doesn't always work out. You can cut yourself, the skin can look a bit raw and aggravated and for guys we normally want to make the jaw look nice and strong, so 'baby face' clean leaves no detail to hold some shadow. Of course, if you're always clean shaven, don't grow a beard for the shoot!

**Makeup:** Prepare your Make Up before coming for actor headshots. We would usually have a make-up table to do some touch-ups as you go but discuss this with the photographer. Arrive with the same amount on as you would wear to a normal audition!. If you're a dancer, then perhaps a little less - as full dance make-up will probably be too heavy for photographic purposes. Most people prefer to start with very neutral, just enough to cover up blemishes and add a little more around the eyes. Feel free to add more as you go and develop your look.

**Fake Tan:** NO, No and No and generally, nope. If it's super subtle and you know what you're doing, then fine - maybe. But if your neck is a different color to your face, it will just look stooooopid. And it will show in your headshot.

**Fake Lashes:** Normally a bit too much, but if you wear them all the time, then we need the photos to look like you so fine, but it's probably a bit over the top for most people.

**Lipstick:** A tinted gloss is normally a good way to start, it gives a little shine and color whilst being subtle. A 'nude' lip-color works nicely. You might want to do one look with color on your lips if a more dramatic or sassy look is useful for your type. When dark purples or browns are used, it makes for difficult shooting.



**Rest and Recovery:** Preparing your skin and lips before the shoot as much as you can is also advised. Sleep, lots of water, no late nights, cut out fatty foods and chocolate if you can.

Spare a thought for your lips as well, dry cracked lips can be quite noticeable, lots of vaseline and lip salve to moisturize them leading up to the shoot might help.

**Guys:** I rarely think you need any make-up. If it's a spot we can clean it up easier in the retouching stage. Under-eyes maybe a little will help if they're bad. Don't do anything unless you're really confident with what you're doing.

If you need more guidance then ask your **Gold Talent Director** to show you some examples or research them online – there are millions of great examples available to look at.

Remember, that mediocrity will never get anyone anywhere in this industry, so take this opportunity NOW and ensure that you are able to provide the very best top quality and professional headshot and/or portfolio of photos.

Knowledge is power – use it or lose it.

As we always say here at Gold Talent International:

**#DONTMESSITUP !**

See you at a Gold Talent / iPOP! audition near you soon!

**YOURS IN THE ARTS:**

**Paul Kershaw | Nico Goosen**

**Member Directors: iPOP!**

